



### Introduction

*Widows are visible everywhere in today's readings. Jesus denounces those scribes who pray impressive prayers but devour widows' houses. He commends the poor widow who in his view gave far more than the major donors. Jesus doesn't see her simply as an object of compassion or charity. She, like the widow of Zarephath who shares her last bit of food with Elijah, does something of great importance.*

### Confession and Forgiveness

In the name of the Father, ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Have mercy on us, O God.

**We confess that we have sinned against you  
and against our neighbor.**

**We have built walls instead of tables  
and have turned away the stranger.**

**We have sought glory for ourselves  
and have treasured that which does not satisfy.**

**Help us to love as you love,  
to welcome those you send,  
and to treasure mercy and justice.**

**Turn us from our ways to your ways,  
and free us to serve those in need. Amen.**

God, who makes all things new,  
forgives your sins for ✠ Jesus' sake  
and remembers them no more.

Lift up your heads and your hearts.

Yours is the kingdom of God. **Amen.**

**Opening Hymn ELW # 689 / LBW # 409**      *Praise and Thanksgiving*  
*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

**Prayer of the Day**

O God, you show forth your almighty power chiefly by reaching out to us in mercy. Grant us the fullness of your grace, strengthen our trust in your promises, and bring all the world to share in the treasures that come through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

**First Reading: 1 Kings 17:8-16**

*This chapter begins the story of Elijah. God sends a drought on Israel because of the sins of King Ahab. This passage depicts God's saving acts not only on behalf of Elijah, but also on behalf of those who are associated with the prophet, even a foreigner, the widow of Zarephath.*

*Read the complete text [here](#).*

**Psalm: Psalm 146**

- <sup>1</sup>Hallelujah! Praise the LORD, O my soul!  
<sup>2</sup>**I will praise the LORD as long as I live;**  
**I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.**  
<sup>3</sup>Put not your trust in rulers, in mortals in whom there is no help.  
<sup>4</sup>**When they breathe their last, they return to earth,**  
**and in that day their thoughts perish.**  
<sup>5</sup>Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help,  
whose hope is in the LORD their God;  
<sup>6</sup>**who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them;**  
**who keeps promises forever;**  
<sup>7</sup>who gives justice to those who are oppressed,  
and food to those who hunger. The LORD sets the captive free.  
<sup>8</sup>**The LORD opens the eyes of the blind;**  
**the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;**  
**the LORD loves the righteous.**  
<sup>9</sup>The LORD cares for the stranger; the LORD sustains the orphan and widow,  
but frustrates the way of the wicked.  
<sup>10</sup>**The LORD shall reign forever,**  
**your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah!**

## **Second Reading: Hebrews 9:24-28**

*The letter to the Hebrews describes Christ as a high priest who offers himself as a sacrifice for our sin. Christ does not die again and again each year. He died once, is alive with God, and will reveal himself on the last day.*

*Read the complete text [here](#).*

## **Gospel: Mark 12:38-44**

*After engaging in a series of public arguments with religious leaders in the temple, Jesus contrasts the proud and oppressive ways of those leaders with the sacrificial humility and poverty of the widow.*

*Read the complete text [here](#).*

## **Reflection on the Text**

Giving is not a popular sermon theme, but it is a theme that Jesus raises multiple times. Jesus asks why we are so concerned that we have enough, when even the sparrows have their daily needs provided for by the generosity of God. Why do we give? How much are we to give? How much is enough?

One of the issues to which we often do not pay much attention is where does our wealth come from? I know, especially here in the United States, it is popular to talk about how someone started with nothing and through hard work and sacrifice, made something of themselves. The popular rags to riches story. But in that story, who should really be given the credit? That person certainly has talent, skills, knowledge, and ambition, but where did they come from? To whom does that person owe thanks?

The problem with taking credit for what we have, and even for claiming that it is ours, is that we fail to remember that all that we have and all that we are comes from God. They are gifts given to us by our loving God – our talent, our skills, our knowledge, and even our ambition – all are gifts of God. So how do we claim to have “pulled ourselves up by our bootstraps and worked for all that we have?” That is certainly the claim that many make, and while not 100% wrong, it is certainly not giving God the credit or the glory.

In our texts today Jesus warns against the scribes and the Pharisees because they often show off their wealth and position. Not only are they in charge, but they also have great status because of it. Those wealthy people who come to the temple give generously **and** they make sure everyone knows it. God is not given the praise or thanks or the glory, but they themselves make sure everyone knows how rich or how powerful they are. Jesus warns his disciples not to be like them.

Then, the widow gives all that she has and is lifted up by Jesus as an example of faithful giving. Widows, in the time of Jesus, were not allowed to own property and most likely had very little. If a woman's husband died, she basically became the property of the husband's family and lived off their generosity. Her own family could buy her back – if they could afford to, but mostly the widow either became the bride of one of her husband's family or she became as a servant and lived off of their generosity. If neither family offered to take in the widow, she became a beggar or worked for very small wages – barely enough to live on, if that much. She had no status, could own no property, and relied on others to survive. That this particular widow even had two copper coins to her name might have been surprising.

The difference between the widow and the wealthy scribes and Pharisees is that she gave God the credit for what she had and gave all that she had to the glory of God. She knew that all she had was from God. Her faith in God is what kept her going. In giving all that she had to God, she was placing herself into God's loving care, knowing that she would be provided for.

Throughout the scriptures widows and orphans are lifted up as the most vulnerable in our society and God continuously call for justice and mercy for the least of these among us. Jesus tells of how the scribes and Pharisees take advantage of the widows and orphans rather than caring for them. Justice and mercy would call for them to be cared for, but they often were not. Justice and mercy should mean they never go hungry, but they often did. Justice and mercy would mean that they would not be treated as slaves, but they often were.

We, as baptized children of God, are called to remember that all that we have are gifts from God and that we are simply the stewards of God's generosity. Rather than keep it for ourselves; rather than making ourselves look prosperous; we are called to care for the widow and orphan.

We are called to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. We are called to do justice and to give mercy to the least of these, our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are called to give and to give generously, joyfully, and without calling attention to what we are doing.

In all that we do, we are called to give God the glory for the great things God has done. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**Hymn of the Day ELW # 685/LBW # 406**

***Take My Life, That I May Be***

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

## Apostles' Creed

*We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:*

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## Prayers of Intercession

Eternal God, you hold firm amid the changes of this world. Hear us now as we pray for the church, the world, and everyone in need.

*A brief silence.*

We give you thanks for social ministries of the church around the world and for every ministry that heals, lifts up, and empowers those who are poor, oppressed, abused, abandoned, or ignored. Build up your ministries and prosper all works of mercy. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We praise you for the bounty of creation and a world of abundance. Protect the earth from all who would devour its resources. Create and strengthen sustainable communities who honor your creation with loving care. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We give you thanks for leaders who seek peace for all nations and lead efforts toward greater justice. Accompany all who suffer the wounds of war, with veterans who carry battle scars from the past, and all who promote peace today. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We praise you for plentiful harvests and generous hearts. Send needed resources and caring neighbors to all those in need. We pray for refugees, orphans, widows, those unemployed, those suffering abuse, and all who are in need. Restore to health all who are sick in any way, especially those we name now. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We praise you for missionaries who share your love in new communities and bring compassion for all. Continue to raise up missionaries for lives of service in your name. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

We give you thanks for the saints who have inspired, challenged, loved, and taught us. Comfort all who grieve and lead us by their example until you gather us in your heavenly home. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God our hope and strength, we entrust to you all for whom we pray. Remain with us always, through Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

### **Lord's Prayer**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

**Closing Hymn ELW # 790 / WOV # 746**

*Day by Day*

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ray Sipe.